

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 271691

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ORIGIN SS-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 /016 R

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DRAFTED BY S/S-O:P.JOHNSON

APPROVED BY S/S-O:P.JOHNSON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 271691

EXDIS

TOSEC 54

FOLLOWING SENT SECSTATE WASHDC FROM BEIRUT 11 DEC 74:

QUOTE S E C R E T BEIRUT 14827

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR US LE

SUBJECT: US-LEBANESE RELATIONS

REF: STATE 270188

1. I MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA AT HIS HOME AT 8:30 P.M. LOCAL DEC 10. I DELIVERED THE SECRETARY'S LETTER AND COMMENTED AS INSTRUCTED ALONG THE LINES OF PARA 1 REFTEL.

2. AFTER READING THE LETTER IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT TAQLA WAS UNHAPPY AND EMBARRASSED. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE THE EXACT CAUSE OF HIS UNHAPPINESS EXCEPT THAT HE EXPECTED A BIT MORE DETAIL AS TO THE INQUIRY AND ALSO THE REITERATION OF THE APOLOGY CONTAINED IN THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 271691

SECRETARY'S LETTER TO TAQLA OF NOVEMBER 14, WHICH HE

WAS PLEASED WITH. OBVIOUSLY EMBARRASSED, TAQLA EXPRESSED THE FEAR, INDEED THE CONVICTION THAT THE LETTER WOULD NOT MOLLIFY THE PRESIDENT AND CONSEQUENTLY HE WAS RELUCTANT TO SHOW IT TO HIM. HE THEN SUDDENLY STOPPED SHORT AND STATED THAT TO END THE ISSUE QUICKLY, A RADICAL APPROACH WAS REQUIRED. WHILE TAQLA HIMSELF WOULD NOW BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO CONSIDER THE MATTER CLOSED, HE EXPLAINED AGAIN THAT THE PROBLEM CENTERED ON PRESIDENT FRANGIE PERSONALLY; THAT FRANGIE AS CHIEF OF STATE HAD (IN HIS OWN MIND) BEEN PERSONALLY INSULTED AND THAT IF HIS ATTITUDE WAS TO BE CHANGED QUICKLY, HE WOULD HAVE TO OBTAIN PERSONAL SATISFACTION. TAQLA WAS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT IF PRESIDENT FORD WOULD WRITE FRANGIE A FRIENDLY LETTER THE MATTER WOULD BE ENDED VERY QUICKLY. HE SAID HE HAD ENDEAVORED TO PROBE THE PRESIDENT'S THINKING RECENTLY AND THE LATTER SIMPLY REFUSED TO DISCUSS THE MATTER. TAQLA SUGGESTED A LETTER WHICH COULD BE BRIEF BUT SHOULD CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- A) THAT PRESIDENT FORD AWARE OF REGRETTABLE INCIDENT,
- B) THAT HE ASSOCIATES HIMSELF WITH REGRETS ALREADY EXPRESSED BY SECRETARY AND AMBASSADOR GODLEY,
- C) HOPES THAT INCIDENT WOULD NOW BE CONSIDERED CLOSED IN INTEREST OF RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES.

3. IN RESPONSE I REPEATED THAT MY GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED THAT WE HAD DONE ALL THAT COULD BE REASONABLY EXPECTED AND THAT IN THAT CONTEXT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MOST DIFFICULT FOR US TO OBTAIN SUCH A LETTER. WITHOUT SUCH A LETTER WHAT DID HE SUGGEST? HE REPLIED THAT AS HE HAD MENTIONED BEFORE, AMBASSADOR GODLEY COULD RETURN ANY TIME HE WANTED. THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS HIS BEING RECEIVED BY THE PRESIDENT. GODLEY COULD RETURN, CARRY ON HIS BUSINESS WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND HE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WOULD WORK OVER A PERIOD OF TIME TO TRY TO MOLLIFY THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION. I THEN SUGGESTED THAT IF SUCH A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT FORD WERE OBTAINED, AMBASSADOR GODLEY SHOULD BRING THE LETTER BACK WITH

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 271691

HIM. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAW NO PROBLEM BUT NOTED THAT THE LETTER SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO HIM. HE REPEATED THAT IN SUCH A CASE, HE WAS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT SHORTLY THEREAFTER THE AMBASSADOR, THE PRESIDENT AND HIMSELF "WOULD ALL HAVE A WHISKEY TOGETHER."

4. COMMENT: AS AMBASSADOR GODLEY IS AWARE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD ALREADY RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT FORD TO PRESIDENT FRANGIE ON THE INCIDENT BOTH WITH AMBASSADOR GODLEY AND MYSELF. WE HAVE UP TO NOW BOTH DISCOURAGED THE IDEA. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE CHARACTER AND THE FEELINGS OF FRANGIE, I STRONGLY DOUBT THAT FRANGIE IS GOING TO ALTER HIS ATTITUDE IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH A LETTER. IF WE WANT TO SETTLE THE MATTER QUICKLY THIS IS THE WAY. THERE IS, OF COURSE, ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE LETTER WON'T WORK EITHER BUT TAQLA SEEMED QUITE CONFIDENT THAT IT WOULD. I MIGHT ADD THAT COLONEL DAHDAH, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PUBLIC SECURITY, RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH A LETTER IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT WITH ME AT LUNCH AT MY HOME DEC 11. DAHDAH WHO IS CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT AND WHOSE BROTHER IS MARRIED TO THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER, WAS CATEGORIC THAT IF SUCH A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT REFERRED TO THE INCIDENT, FRANGIE WOULD BE SATISFIED AND THE MATTER CLOSED.

5. IF SUCH A LETTER IS FEASIBLE, I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT AMBASSADOR GODLEY BRING IT BACK WITH HIM IN ORDER THAT HE MAY HAVE SOMETHING WITH HIM AND ALSO, AND MORE IMPORTANT, RECEIVE IN THE EYES OF THE LEBANESE CREDIT FOR OBTAINING THE LETTER. IF A LETTER IS NOT FEASIBLE, I SUGGEST THAT AMBASSADOR GODLEY RETURN IN ANY EVENT AND LET TIME RUN ITS COURSE WITH THE PRESIDENT. I SIMPLY DON'T THINK THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE SAVE THE LETTER MENTIONED ABOVE WHICH WE CAN DO NOW. NEITHER DO I THINK GETTING TOUGH WITH THEM WOULD BE VERY PRODUCTIVE. FRANGIE IS TOO DOMINATED BY CONSIDERATIONS OF PRIDE TO BE MOVED BY TOUGHNESS. UNFORTUNATELY, IN MY JUDGMENT, IT WOULD ONLY MAKE HIM MORE STUBBORN AND MORE DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH.

6. IN CLOSING I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE THAT TAQLA IS AS FRUSTRATED AS WE ARE IN HIS PERSISTENT EFFORTS TO RESOLVE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 271691

THIS UNFORTUNATE MATTER. HOUGHTON UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, LETTERS, AMBASSADORS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE271691
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O:P.JOHNSON
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740359-1041
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741243/aaaabkht.tel
Line Count: 155
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 74 STATE 270188
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 APR 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <15-Aug-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-LEBANESE RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, US, LE, (GODLEY), (TAQLA)
To: BRUSSELS
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005